

Department of State Announcement on the Withdrawal of British and French Forces (December 3, 1956)

Caption: On 3 December 1956, the US State Department announced the withdrawal of French and British forces from Egypt and stressed the importance of action taken by the United Nations in the peaceful settlement of the Suez crisis.

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The British and French Governments have now declared their purpose to comply with the U.N. resolution regarding withdrawal of their forces from Egypt. They have stated that they will work out with General Burns, Commander of the United Nations forces, a definite and early schedule for complete withdrawal.

The United States welcomes this decision. Its implementation will strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to deal with the other aspects of the Middle Eastern problems which are still unfinished business.

It will now, more than ever, become incumbent upon all members of the United Nations to insure that the remaining issues are dealt with justly and promptly. The United States has repeatedly said during this crisis in the Middle East that the United Nations cannot rightfully or prudently stop merely with maintaining peace. Under its charter it is obligated to deal with the basic sources of international friction and conflicts of interest. Only in this way can it attain the charter goal of peace with justice.

In keeping with this obligation the United States will continue fully to support the measures required to make the United Nations force adequate and effective for its mission. In carrying out his plans for this purpose the Secretary-General can count on the unstinting cooperation of the United States.

As the United Nations force replaces those of the United Kingdom and France, the clearance of the canal becomes imperative. Every day of delay in restoring the canal to normal use is a breach of the 1888 treaty and a wrong to the large number of nations throughout the world whose economies depend so heavily on its reliable operation.

The United Nations and the interested states should, we believe, promptly direct their attention to the underlying Middle East problems. The United States Government considers it essential that arrangements be worked out without delay to insure the operation of the canal in conformity with the six principles approved by the resolution of the Security Council on October 13, 1956.

The United States is equally determined through the United Nations and in other useful ways, to assist in bringing about a permanent settlement of the other persistent conflicts which have plagued the Middle East over recent years. Repeatedly we have made clear our willingness to contribute for the purpose of bringing stability and just peace to this area. The present crisis is a challenge to all nations to work to this end.